

We continue to have the strongest economy in a generation, the lowest unemployment in a quarter century, the lowest inflation in 30 years, the highest homeownership in history. We're on track to have the longest peacetime recovery in the history of our country. These are good times for America.

But how shall we maintain this momentum? We must first press forward with this new economic strategy. It is working. We must do more also to continue to create high-wage jobs. And finally, we must make sure that our people have the skills to fill them.

The new economy is increasingly driven by creativity, innovation, and technology, with high-skill jobs growing at nearly 3 times the rate of other jobs. In the field of information technology, the hunt for employees with high-tech skills is becoming more and more intense. There are hundreds of thousands of vacancies out there in America right now.

The key to expanding opportunity is education and training. Through our new HOPE scholarships, the lifetime learning credits, education IRA's, expanded Pell grant scholarships, better student loans, we've opened the door to college for all people of all ages who are willing to work for it.

Recently, we learned that our high school seniors lagged behind the rest of the industrial world in math and science. We must do more there. We must work to raise standards, reduce class size, improve teaching, have people taking more challenging courses, and increase accountability.

But we also, to look at the immediate situation, must do more to reform our job training system. For more than 3 years, I have called on Congress to consolidate the tangle of training programs we have today into a "GI bill" for workers, to create a network of one-stop career centers, to increase accountability, to ensure results, to empower people to gain the skills that are in greatest market demand. Secretary Herman and Secretary Daley, who are here with me today, are working in particular to address the job shortage in the information technology area.

Now, last year a bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives passed a bill that would achieve the goals that I have called for for years now. A similar bill has attracted bipartisan support in the Senate. I'm encour-

aged by reports that the Senate is likely to take up this legislation. In the wake of these employment numbers, with unemployment low and the crying demand for higher skills and still people in some of our inner-city neighborhoods and rural areas unemployed, I ask the Senate to pass this bill and send it to me so that I can sign it into law. The legislation is essentially to help more Americans win in today's economy and to keep our recovery going.

Unemployment is low, job growth is strong, our economy is expanding at a healthy pace. We are uniquely poised now to widen the circle of opportunity for the 21st century. Passing the "GI bill" for America's workers is one of the best ways we can continue to grow.

Thank you, and thank you to the economic team and congratulations to the American people. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on Senate Action To Continue the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Initiative

March 6, 1998

I am pleased that the Senate, in a strong bipartisan vote of 58 to 37, today retained the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program within the ISTEA bill, which provides expanded economic opportunity for women- and minority-owned businesses. This program was enacted into law under President Reagan in response to extremely low participation rates by women and minorities in federally assisted highway and transit construction projects.

In particular, I want to applaud Senators Baucus and Chafee, who garnered widespread support for the continuation of this important program.

Today's vote reaffirms my administration's "Amend it; don't end it" approach to affirmative action and promoting equal opportunity. We are now one step closer to getting an important, multi-billion transportation bill enacted into legislation.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

February 28

In the afternoon, the President traveled from Salt Lake City, UT, to Los Angeles, CA. He returned to Salt Lake City in the evening, arriving after midnight.

March 1

In the evening, the President and Hillary Clinton returned to Washington, DC.

March 2

The President announced his intention to nominate Thelma J. Askey, Jennifer Anne Hillman, and Stephen Koplan as Commissioners on the U.S. International Trade Commission.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Santiago, Chile, April 16–20 for a state visit and to attend the second Summit of the Americas.

March 3

In the evening, the President traveled to New York City, and later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving after midnight.

The President announced his intention to nominate Arthur A. McGiverin to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert H. Beatty, Jr., to serve as a Commissioner on the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Miles Lerman as Chair and member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint John H. Catlin, Pamela Young-Holmes, and Donna L. Sorkin to serve as members of the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Norman R. Augustine as Principal

Officer and member of the Board of Governors of the American National Red Cross.

The President announced his intention to appoint Marvin F. (Bud) Moss to serve as a member of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

The President declared a major disaster in Kentucky and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm on February 4–6.

The President declared a major disaster in New Jersey and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter coastal storm, high winds, and flooding on February 4–9.

The President and Hillary Clinton announced that Cambridge University physicist Stephen Hawking will be guest lecturer at the second Millennium Evening at the White House on March 6.

March 4

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph W. Westphal to be Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works at the Department of Defense.

The President requested emergency funding from Congress to support military operations in Bosnia and Southwest Asia and meet urgent needs created by recent natural disasters.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Westport, CT, and Cincinnati, OH, on March 10.

March 5

The President announced his intention to nominate Shirley Elizabeth Barnes to be Ambassador to Madagascar.

March 6

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles R. Stith to be Ambassador to Tanzania.

The President announced his intention to nominate Arthur Levitt, Jr., as Chair and Commissioner of the Securities and Exchange Commission.